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TWO VERSIONS OF THE HISTORY OF MAZDAK.

By Arthur Christensen.

In my book "Le roi Kawādh I et le communisme Mazdakite" (Memoirs of the Danish Academy, 1925) I have tried to explain how the bulk of Arab and Persian sources of the history of Mazdakism are divisible into the following four classes, representing four lines of tradition:

I (Y'aqūbī and some part of the narrative of Ṭabarī): Kawādh is an energetic king. He is dethroned in consequence of the execution of the grandee Sōkhrā and delivered from prison by a stratagem of his sister. The Mazdakites are mentioned only in connection with the reign of his son Khusrau.

II (Eutychius, Ibn Qutaiba, some parts of Ṭabarī, Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir el-Maqdisī, Mas'ūdī, Ḥamza Isfahāni): Kawādh, dethroned and incarcerated by the Mazdakites, is liberated and restored to his throne by Zarmihr, whose father Sōkhrā he has formerly caused to be killed. The Mazdakites are extirpated, after his death, by Khusrau.

III (Dīnawarī, the Nihāyatu'l-irab and a passage in Ṭabarī): Kawādh is dethroned by the grandees owing to his alliance with the Mazdakites and liberated by his sister and Zarmihr. After his restoration he abandons his alliance with the Mazdakites and rules with wisdom and energy. The extirpation of the Mazdakites takes place after his death, by order of Khusrau.

IV (The Kitābu'l-aghānī, a passage in Ḥamza, Ja'ālibī, Firdausī, the Mujmilu't-tawārīkh, Bīrūnī, Ibnu'l-Aṯīr and Abū-l-Fidā): Kawādh is dethroned owing to the putting to death of Sōkhrā. After the restoration, which is carried

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through with the assistance of Zarmihr, Mazdak appears, and Kawādh accepts his doctrine. Mazdak is defeated in a religious disputation and killed together with his adherents by order of Khusrau. Some of the sources explain the final catastrophe in another way: Khusrau causes Mazdak to be put to death in order to revenge himself for a humiliation formerly inflicted on him by Mazdak.

To these four lines of tradition, all of which derive from the Khwadhāināmagh, are to be added some special traditions, *inter alia* one proceeding from the Arabs of Hīra. I have pointed out, further, that the line IV has made use of some traits derived from a legendary narrative, given in a more detailed form in the Siyāsatnāmah of Niẓāmu'l-mulk, the source of which can be established with a fair amount of certainty to be the last Pahlavi romance named Mazdak-nāmagh, mentioned in the Fihrist and the Nihāyat as well as by Ḥamza.

Amongst the Parsi sources of the history or legend of Mazdakism I mentioned a Persian rivāyat, known to me only from a brief notice given by West in the "Grundriss der Iran. Philologie", II, p. 128. Later on, I acquired a copy of the second volume of Dârâb Hormazyâr's Rivâyât by Ervad Manockji Rustamji Unvâlâ, (with an Introduction by Shams-ul-ulamâ Jivanji Jamshedji Modi), published in 1922 at Bombay, in which the rivāyat in question is to be found on pp. 214-230. The substance of the poem, which was composed in the year 985 of the Yazdgard era (=1025 A.H., 1616 A.D.) by the dastur Anōšīrvān of Kermān, is as follows:

During the reign of Kawādh, the son of Pērōz, an Indian, Mazdak by name, presents himself to the king. He asserts that it has been revealed to him that he is to introduce a new religion in the world. As the king demands that he shall prove the truth of his claim by a

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miracle, he plans a trick. He makes an underground passage which leads to a spot just below the holy fire of the fire-temple. Having given the necessary instructions to one of his servants, he invites the king to visit the fire-temple. Kawādh proceeds to the temple, accompanied by the mōbadhs and the grandees. Mazdak, who attends the king, declares that the fire itself shall affirm the truth of his prophecy. Then he asks the fire whether he has been sent by God or not, and the servant concealed underneath the fire replies that really Mazdak is in possession of a divine revelation, and that his prophecy must be accepted. The king, believing that the holy fire has spoken, grants to Mazdak a seat of honour at his side and accepts the communist doctrine which he explains in detail to him. Then Kawādh introduces the communism of property and makes Mazdak his vezir. The men of distinction are discontented, but the mob rejoices. Kawādh orders that all guests who may present themselves in a house, shall be entertained with food and wine, and if the host has a daughter, the guests, one after another, shall be admitted to have commerce with her. The grandees and mōbadhs go to the prince Anōsharwān, then 17 years old, and make complaints. Anōsharwān takes the mōbadhs with him to the king, and these warn Kawādh not to listen to the words of Mazdak, and remind him of the miracles produced by Zardusht in the time of Vishtasp and by Ādhurbadh in the time of Ardashīr. The king appeals to Mazdak to perform a miracle, but Mazdak replies that the fire bears witness to the truth of his revelation. The mōbadhs return unsuccessful.

Then Kawādh orders his servants to put in irons Anōsharwān, who demands a respite of 40 days in order to consult the Zand and the Avesta on the subject. The delay is granted, and now Anōsharwān writes to the dasturs and sends a message to a great and learned mōbadh of Shīrāz, summoning him to his side. On the

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fortieth day, Mazdak orders to put the prince in irons, but Anōsharwān objects that the fortieth day is not gone, and returns to his house. Just at that moment the mōbadh of Shīrāz appears before him. Anōsharwān reproaches him for being so late, and the mōbadh, having excused himself, inspires him with courage and asks him to take care to keep his presence secret from Mazdak. Then Anōsharwān goes to the king and requests an audience for the mōbadh. The request is granted, and the mōbadh, informs the king that Mazdak has misinterpreted the language of the stars; the stars do not say, as Mazdak pretends, that a new prophet shall come forth at that time, on the contrary, the Zoroastrian faith shall last until the day of doom. The next day a discussion takes place between Mazdak and the mōbadh. The latter puts several questions to Mazdak, who, having replied to them, demands that the mōbadh shall be put to death. But the king says he cannot put to death a man whom he does not consider guilty of any crime.

Now Mazdak gives directions to two of his servants: on the following day the king will go to the fire-temple in order to hear the voice of the fire; then they must be present with their swords concealed under their garments, and when the fire commands the death of the king, they are to slay him. But the mōbadh warns Anōsharwān to be on his guard and to have armed men ready. The next day Kawādh visits the temple together with Mazdak. Interrogated by Mazdak, the fire answers that for three days it has not got any food, therefore a portion of the entrails of the king must be given to it. Kawādh himself is willing to be killed by the holy fire, so that he may attain eternal happiness, but Anōsharwān prevents the murder by the help of his armed men. After that event, Anōsharwān, on the suggestion of the mōbadh, seizes two of the servants of Mazdak, and forces them to disclose the trick of the

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speaking fire. They repeat their confession before the king. Then a plot is formed against Mazdak. Kawādh informs him that Anōsharwān is ready to embrace his religion, and invites him to make a list of all his adherents, so that one may know their number. Mazdak writes out a list including 12,000 names and presents it to the king, who hands it over to Anōsharwān. On the demand of Anōsharwān, Kawādh invites Mazdak to convoke all the persons enumerated on the list: robes of honour will be distributed to them all. Three months afterwards, a great feast is prepared, and Mazdak and all his adherents are summoned. On the appointed day a great banquet is given. Mazdak is placed at the table by the side of the king. With the permission of Kawādh, Anōsharwān invites the Mazdakites to come out with him into the garden in order there to receive the robes of honour. In the garden Anōsharwān, having previously caused 12,000 holes to be dug, has posted his armed men. The Mazdakites are admitted to the garden in groups of 30-40 persons and instantly seized by the soldiers, undressed and planted, head-downwards, in the holes. When all the 12,000 Mazdakites have been killed in that way, Anōsharwān takes Mazdak out with him into the garden to see the men in their fine robes of honour. Mazdak is terrified at the sight of the strange "fruits of the garden" triumphantly shown to him by the prince. Then Anōsharwān gives orders to his men to seize Mazdak and immure him, so that only half of his body be free. In this position he receives a severe lecture from the prince and is finally totally mured up. At last, Anōsharwān incarcerates his father Kawādh and accedes to the throne. Several traits showing the justice of Anōsharwān are added to the narrative.

It is easy enough to assign to this poem its place among our sources. In all the main features, and even in most details, it closely agrees with the Siyāsat-nāmah.

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Now, it is highly improbable that the Pārsī poet, the dastur Anōshīrvan of Kermān, who is the author of a series of rivāyats treating of subjects from the Zoroastrian legendary history,[1] should have followed as his source the Islamic Siyāsat-nāmah, a work that was never very widely known, as may be seen from the scarcity of manuscripts. Furthermore, the two narratives differ in some details, which fact seems to confirm the supposition that the later of the two does not depend directly on the earlier. Thus the rivāyat describes Mazdak as an Indian, whereas in the Siyāsat-nāmah he is a Persian.[2] The place of domicile of the mōbadh appealed to by Anōsharwān is in the Siyāsat-nāmah given as Kuval in Pārs, in the rivāyat as Shīrāz. According to the Siyāsat-nāmah, Mazdak is precipitated headlong into a hole made in an elevated platform; the rivāyat has him immured in the way described above. The most striking difference between the two sources is the following: in the rivāyat the mōbadh denounces to the king the claim of Mazdak as false, because it is written in the stars that the Zoroastrian faith shall last until the day of doom; the author of the Siyāsat-nāmah, or his immediate Islamic source, has not resisted the temptation to alter the original text for the glory of Islam: here the mōbadh admits that it is indeed written in the stars that a new prophet shall abolish the Zoroastrian religion, but that prophet, who is not Mazdak, is yet unborn and shall not be a Persian.

Our conclusion is this: the rivāyat is based on a Pārsī source representing a literary tradition which goes back to the old Pahlavi romance, being independent of the version given in the Siyāsat-nāmah. Looking upon this last version alone, we might be in doubt whether its narrative contains the whole of the Pahlavi book, or whether it gives only the last part of the original; but by

1 F. Rosenberg, Notices de littérature parsie, St. Petersb. 1919, p. 11 sq.

2 *Vide* ed. Schefer, p. 172, line 20.

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comparing it with the rivāyat we are in a position to state with a considerable degree of probability, that only a few introductory remarks have been omitted in the former version.

Thus, a comparative study of these two versions enables us to reconstruct the whole substance of the lost Mazdak-nāmagh.

* * *

There exists still another account of the Mazdak incident, which I had overlooked. It is to be found in the anonymous Persian Fārs-nāmah, composed in the 12th century A.D. and edited in 1921 by G. le Strange and R. A. Nicholson for the Gibb Memorial Series. The unknown author, being a native of Balkh, has been denominated by G. le Strange Ibnu'l-Balkhī. Here I give a summary of the narrative to be found on pp. 84–91 of the edition :

During the reign of Kawādh, Mazdak makes his appearance and preaches his communist doctrine. The king accepts the new religion and makes a number of communist laws. Hence he is deposed, and Mazdak flies to Azerbaijan. Kawādh is delivered from prison by his sister and makes his way into Turkestan, where he marries the daughter of a spāhbadh. On leaving that country in order to recapture his kingdom, he commands that, if his wife gives birth to a son, she shall call him Anōsharwān. Later on Kawādh reconquers his kingdom. During his absence, Shamir, king of Yemen, has invaded Iran and extended his military expedition as far as Transoxania and China. The Byzantine Empire, too, has waged war with Iran. Kawādh makes peace with the Arabs and invades Byzantine territory. In the meantime his father-in-law arrives with his daughter and his little grandson Anōsharwān. In order to ascertain whether the boy is really his son or not, Kawādh sits down on a carpet, spread

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in the garden, amidst a group of men, all like himself in appearance and dress; a flower of sweet basil is given to the child by the courtiers, who order him to present it to the king. The boy, having looked upon the group, goes straight up to Kawādh and presents to him the flower with the usual marks of respect. Accordingly Kawādh recognizes Anōsharwān as his son. The boy is instructed by the best teachers and distinguishes himself in all sciences and in good manners. When he has grown up, he wishes to check the fatal influence of Mazdak over his father, but he is not yet strong enough to make the attempt. Once, when father and son sit together, Kawādh asks his son how he was able to know him among the other men, not having seen him before. Anōsharwān says that he observed the splendour of majesty in the eyes of Kawādh, and love awoke in his heart at the same moment. He seizes the opportunity to ask his father why he made that trial. On the answer of Kawādh, that he had never seen his son and wished to be sure that the boy they brought to him was really his offspring, Anōsharwān begs to remark that by admitting the importance of relationship and pride of race, Kawādh has himself denied the Mazdakite doctrine about community of wives. As the argument makes a certain impression on Kawādh, the prince continues his remonstrances, pointing out that as money and goods are, according to the Mazdakite faith, the common property of all, Mazdak may plunder the whole treasure of the king, if he wishes to do so, nay, if he were desirous of dishonouring the harem of the king, Kawādh, as an adherent to this doctrine, could not prevent him from doing so. Kawādh admits the truth of the observations and repents of his conduct, declaring that never had anybody put things in that light to him, and if anyone else had done it, he would have thought he spoke in hatred. Anōsharwān advises his father to trust in God and first and foremost to fight the foreign enemies.

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Kawādh adopts his advice and defeats the Byzantines. On his return from the expedition he abdicates in favour of his son, and entreating him to act more wisely than he has done himself, he retires from the world.

Anōsharwān rules with justice and wisdom. Having consulted his advisers, he watches the propitious moment for overcoming Mazdak. He pretends to be an admirer of Mazdak and gives him to understand that he is weary of his advisers and courtiers and wishes to supply their place with adherents of Mazdak, and he invites Mazdak to make two lists, one containing the distinguished members of his community and the other the soldiers and other men of the common people who follow his doctrine. Mazdak composes the two lists comprising a total of more than 150,000 names. Then Anōsharwān asks Mazdak to invite all the distinguished Mazdakites to a banquet on the occasion of the Mihrgān festival in order that the king may distribute the high dignities among them. Two thousand Mazdakites are placed at a long table on the shore of the Tigris, Mazdak himself being seated by the side of the king. A hundred warriors are standing all around with their weapons concealed under their garments. Suddenly Anōsharwān kills Mazdak with a blow of his battle-axe. At this signal the warriors assault the Mazdakites and kill them all. In all the provinces of the empire the Mazdakites are seized; some of them are killed, others repent and are pardoned.

This narrative evidently does not represent a single line of tradition; it is based on a combination of sources belonging to different lines. The character of Kawāḍh is a curious mixture of energy (*vide* line I and III) and stupidity (line IV). The succession of the events is chiefly that of line III, but all matters concerning Sōkhrā and Zarmihr are omitted The Shamir incident is taken from the Ḥīra tradition, but adapted to the main narrative. The

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accession of Khusrau Anōsharwān during the lifetime of his father is a trait borrowed from line IV, but while, according to Ṭa'ālibī and the Mazdak-nāmagh, Kawādh is forcibly dethroned, the abdication, in the Fārsnāmah, is voluntary. One legendary motif in our narrative does not occur, as far as I know, in any other old source: the experiment by means of which Kawādh ascertains that Anōsharwān is really his son, and the ingenious manner in which Anōsharwān avails himself of his father's pride of race as an argument against the teachings of Mazdak.

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